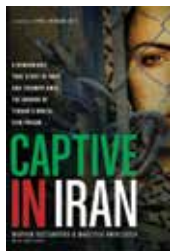


Reflections, Impressions & Experiences



Captive in Iran: A remarkable true story of hope and triumph amid the horror of Tehran's brutal Evin Prison

Rostampour, M. & Amirizadeh, M., (2013). USA: Tyndale Momentum

Andrea Grant

Teacher Librarian, Central Coast Adventist School, Erina, NSW

***Captive in Iran* is a recount of how Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh survived 259 days of imprisonment under harsh, cruel and unjust conditions for daring to be Christians who shared their faith.**

It is not illegal to be a Christian in Iran, which is an Islamic nation, however the authorities interpret the laws to suit their situation without any accountability. Maryam and Marziyeh were observed for a period of time and were under suspicion of proselytising. In actual fact these two women had for three years been actively sharing their faith in Tehran with anyone who showed an interest. The women had very deliberately divided a map of the city into squares, and had been working through each sector for four hours every night. They had given away 20,000 Bibles in this time!

When Maryam and Marziyeh were arrested, they were, by the laws of the country, illegally held in a detention centre for two weeks without being formally charged. They were interrogated numerous times without a lawyer present, and suffered filthy conditions, hunger and sickness. Despite all this, the young women encouraged every woman detainee they met by praying for each of them, speaking words of compassion, sharing what little they had or received, and showing God's love to their guards. For example Maryam and Marziyeh cleaned the blocked toilets and bathrooms of the centre and prayed for their guards.

When the two women were moved to Evin Prison, notorious for its torture and brutal treatment of prisoners and concentration camp-

like conditions, they continued to minister to the prisoners and guards without compromising their beliefs or faith. The prison became their church where they found the blessing of being able to openly worship, and also to share with everyone—something they could not do outside the prison walls! Surrounded by despair, ignorance, the confronting lesbian behaviour of many inmates, cruelty of the guards, and debilitating, physical sickness, Maryam and Marziyeh displayed outward calm and courage. At times they cried because of their illness and physical hurts or the pain suffered by other prisoners, and the inhumane treatment meted out. But they were not crushed by the oppression on their spirits and minds because they fully relied on the Holy Spirit and their trust in their relationship with Jesus.

The story of the Maryam and Marziyeh is delivered in a candid and factual voice, but the passionate response to the injustice suffered by the Iranian people, especially Iranian women, resonates loud and clear. The unfair plight of women living under a repressive religious dictatorship is highlighted with many examples over and over again in the book. Every action and word of an Iranian woman is controlled by a man. For example, religious laws give men a way to engage in activities with prostitutes without censure from society or family. Maryam and Marziyeh want the world to know that Iranian women, in fact the Iranian people, can be free from this repressed life because of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, just as they are. The women are convinced that the people of Iran have a hunger to know Jesus. Many of the people they prayed for, requested prayer, including many of the guards and prison wardens

As I read this book I felt myself comparing these amazing women to Paul and Silas singing in prison, to Joseph and the dreams God gave him, to Daniel for his courageous prayer life, again to Joseph and Daniel standing firm in the face of temptation that could have eased their way, and to Paul for all the afflictions that fell on him because of his missionary zeal—these women's faith stand as tall as these Bible greats. The Beatitudes flow like a psalm of praise

through the words and actions of Maryam and Marziyeh, especially, “Blessed are they who are persecuted for My sake...”

‘You have to have more faith’; ‘just trust in God’; ‘this is God’s will’—these are some clichés to which we give lip service. *Captive in Iran* will challenge you—not so much in what you believe, but actually putting that belief into practice and living it; not so much in whether you have faith, but how much faith, raw faith, put-it-all-on-the-line-faith do you really have in God?

This book is frank and descriptive of the conditions in prison, the crimes committed by people, and the actions lived out by prisoners in prison. It is recommended for mature readers.

Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh left their mark on the prisoners and guards, and the prisons of Tehran where they were incarcerated. They willingly gave up their will to the Holy Spirit, and many who would have never known about the love of God were profoundly touched. Through them, the light and hope about Jesus Christ will be passed on to other lives in Iran. Read their story; be challenged, be strengthened in faith, be filled with gratitude. **TEACH**

Website: <http://captiveiniran.com/>